

ENGINEERING ACCESS

*Integrating Internationally Educated Engineers into the Ontario
Professional Workforce*

A project of

CAPE

THE COUNCIL FOR ACCESS TO PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERING

PROCEEDINGS

*FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION ON THE ROLE OF ETHNO-
CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS OF TORONTO*

*15 OCTOBER 2003
METRO HALL, TORONTO*

1. INTRODUCTION

This focus group which brought together nine ethno-cultural associations and three coalitions advocating on behalf of Internationally Educated Engineers (IEs) had a twofold purpose:

1. To identify :
 - Community groups serving Internationally Educated Engineers (IEs)
 - The role played and therefore the stake held by these groups in servicing IEs and:
 - The barriers faced by these groups in providing the services to IES.
2. To bring together CAPE and community groups to build synergy towards the common goal of integrating IEs into the Ontario professional workforce.

These proceedings aim to record and capture the discussions and outcome of this focus group meeting which has opened up several windows of opportunity to work together in the future.

2. PRESENTATION ONE: A MODEL OF AN ESTABLISHED INTERNATIONALLY EDUCATED ENGINEERS ASSOCIATION

By Mr. T. Wesolowski, Association of Polish Engineers In Canada

The Following is a point form summary of this presentation.

- As a consequence of the Second World War many polish engineers ended up in Britain and France. They were not able to return home after the war because territories had been annexed or they were blacklisted. In order to avoid becoming displaced persons many of these engineers who were educated in Scotland and England ended up in Canada which at the time was suffering from a shortage of engineers.
- As the number grew and like interests emerged, the group set up a multi racial Chapter of the British Engineers. In 1941 this was converted into a separate Polish association and by 1942 it had 112 members. Later the association helped to get another 270 engineers from Britain as they might otherwise have become displaced persons.
- Most of these engineers spoke little or no English or French and had to learn the language of their new country on their own after arriving in Canada. Recognizing the necessity of learning English/French the association developed language courses for its members
- The attention of the association was soon drawn to the credential assessment process for engineers educated outside Canada and it held discussions with PEO and assisted in establishing the accreditation process for polish engineers.
- Among their achievements in Canada this group of engineers set up 5 manufacturing plants, obtained 35 patents and introduced 5 new product lines.
- At present the association has 400-500 paying members, holds 2-3 seminars a month and invites a prominent engineer to make a technical presentation at least once every quarter.
- It has eight branches located in Toronto, Ottawa, Kitchener, Hamilton, Mississauga, Montreal, Oshawa and Alberta. The ones in Mississauga, Toronto and Ottawa are the largest. The Ottawa chapter has the largest number of senior members
- Like most associations it suffers some problems and at present has a weakening financial base as the senior members who pay a reduced fee of \$12 as opposed to the standard subscription of \$46, are increasing.

3. PRESENTATION TWO: PERSONAL EXPERIENCES OF A DISTINGUISHED INTERNATIONALLY EDUCATED ENGINEER

By Mr Martin Van Duyn, Netherlands Luncheon Club

The following is a point form summary of this presentation:

- Mr. Martin van Duyn is a member of the Netherlands Luncheon Club of 250 members including a few engineers and is primarily a social meeting club of Dutch immigrants.
- Since 1996, Mr. Martin van Duyn has worked as an independent consultant based in Peterborough.
- He graduated from the prestigious Delft University in Holland before going to MIT in the USA as an exchange student during which phase he earned a good stipend and enjoyed himself.
- Based on this experience and the close ties that developed between Holland which was freed from the Germans by the Canadians during the Second World War, Martin decided to immigrate to Canada. This became an attractive option when upon approaching the immigration offices in his country he was advised that prospects for engineers with qualifications matching his were very good in Canada.
- After selling all his possessions and paying for his way here, Martin found himself at Union Station with \$15 dollars in his pocket, nobody to turn to and no knowledge of where to go to look for an engineering job.
- In fact it took him six weeks of struggle and survival jobs to find his first pointer towards gainful employment. This led him to a recruiter at Queens University pursuing which lead he learnt to network and eventually ended up in Montreal as a member of a member of an engineering team mandated to design turbines.
- It was a shock for Martin to learn that his engineering credentials needed to be assessed or that he needed a license to practice engineering in Canada.
- The lack of family support became a major concern particularly after he got married and Martin attempted to go back to the Netherlands several times. However his colleagues on the design team eventually replaced this need for a family and Martin was able to settle down in Canada. There has been no looking back since that stage as Martin has gone from one challenge to the next in the field of turbine design.
- Martin was very pleasantly surprised to learn the he had been awarded the professional excellence award by the Association of Professional Engineers of Ontario when he received the letter from PEO three years ago.
- Martin understands the need for licensing engineers in Canada with a highly racially diverse population, but believes that more could be done by the PEO to facilitate the licensing process for those immigrants who have highly ranked university education, experience and a fair grasp of one of the two official languages of Canada. At the same time Martin believes that in the end the market regulates a profession. If an engineer is good at his work he will find a job whereas no employer will keep an incompetent engineer for long. He also expressed the reservation that new trends in PEO towards increased enforcement and regulation will almost call for policing of engineers from within their own fraternity.

4. PRESENTATION THREE: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE COUNCIL FOR ACCESS TO PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERS (CAPE)

By Alberto De Santis

In his address Alberto explained that CAPE started out in 1990 when a number of independent associations serving internationally trained engineers got together. After four years of working together, these groups were able to get some support from Skills for Change (SFC) to develop a strategic plan and the identification of the key issues facing internationally educated/foreign trained engineers. The issues identified in 1996 included:

- Communication with the Professional Engineers of Ontario;
- Information on Licensing;
- Assessment of credentials; and
- Training.

Consequently dialogue was started with PEO and led to the formation of the joint committee of CAPE and the Admissions, Complaints, Discipline and Enforcement Task Force of PEO in 1998. This committee's work resulted in:

- Increasing the frequency with which the PEO exams were held from once a year to twice every year.
- The inclusion of IEs into the Engineer-in-training (EIT) program
- Presentation of Information sessions by PEO at forums involving IEs
- The introduction of an appeals process in the licensing requirements for IEs
- The introduction of the provisional licenses for IEs who met all licensing requirements except the one year Canadian experience requirement.

In 2000/2001 CAPE began to reassess its situation and carried out a second strategic planning exercise following which it was clear that:

- The main strength of CAPE lay in advocacy
- Employment of IEs rather than licensing was the key issue that must be emphasized.

However the following are dilemmas that CAPE faces:

- As an advocacy agency what are the services it should offer
- What role should it play in relation to Licensing/employment?

The Engineering Access Project that CAPE is undertaking under the trusteeship of the Council of Agencies serving South Asians (CASSA) is meant to address and clarify these dilemmas. It is an action research project that will involve an interactive process to determine stakeholder requirements. The participant's valuable contribution to this project should:

- Be faithful/accurate
- Include feedback
- Ensure that promises made are kept
- Dissuade the idea of "going it alone"

5. PRESENTATION FOUR: THE ENGINEERING ACCESS PROJECT

By Gurmeet Bambrah, Project Coordinator, CAPE

Gurmeet explained that Engineering Access is a three year, Ontario wide project that will seek to:

- Build a collective voice for IEs
- Engage employers in increasing IE access to the engineering workplace
- Advocate on behalf of IEs
- Facilitate multi-stakeholder consultation through a Roundtable
- Create an extensive searchable database of IEs, employers and relevant labour market trends.

She also explained that through this project a number of consultative events will be organized. The first of these is the present focus group that aims to draw together ethno-cultural organizations serving IEs.

6. PRESENTATION FIVE: ADVOCACY AND THE COUNCIL OF AGENCIES SUPPORTING SOUTH ASIANS (CASSA)

By Uzma Shakir

Uzma explained that:

- Cassa is an ethno-specific organization that has chosen not to limit itself to the South Asian community and has chosen instead to address the needs of all internationally educated professionals in general
- Cassa is attempting to develop a collective voice for all internationally educated professionals through associations such as CAPE and AIPSO
- In order to develop this collective voice, it is necessary to find the common ground to form the basis for a collective voice.

With these ideas the focus group was opened for discussions on the way forward.

7. CANADIAN SOCIETY OF IRANIAN ENGINEERS AND ARCHITECTS (MOHANDES)

By Saeed Ziaee

Saeed explained that MOHANDES was set up fifteen years ago and is a well established association having more than 700 members. It offers social, informational and employment support to its members

8. EIPROC – AN ASSOCIATION SERVING SOUTH ASIAN PROFESSIONALS

Mr Ben Joshan President

Ben explained that his association has a membership of well established professionals including engineers and it is seeking to assist the internationally educated professionals.

9. COALICION DE PROFESIONALES DE LAS AMERICAS

Martha Silva

Martha explained that she represented the Canadian Hispanic Congress, the national organization constituted federally in 1984, to represent the approximately 700,000 Spanish speaking people with origins in more than twenty different countries now living in Canada.

10. ASSOCIATION OF BULGARIAN ENGINEERS OF CANADA

Mr. Nickolay Paskale

Nickolay explained that theirs was a new Association yet to be instituted. It has a membership of about 70 Engineers.

11. BANGLADESHI AND INDIAN IEs

Mr Bipin Chauhan

Bipin explained that this is an Association that is under formation and so far has over 100 members on its database.

12. CANADIAN UKRAINIAN IMMIGRANT AID SOCIETY

Liudmylla Semenets

Liudmylla explained that this is a resource centre to which many IEs come when seeking information and employment advice.

13. ITEM ONE: ISSUES FACING INTERNATIONALLY TRAINED ENGINEERS

As illustrated by Martins experiences the key issues facing internationally educated engineers arriving in Canada for the first time include:

- Pre-immigration advice given to engineers as regards prospects for employment in Canada;
- Newcomer issues which every immigrant faces such as identification with familiar ethno-specific communities, family and social support;
- Language training and communication.
- Understanding the regulations and methods of finding employment in Canada including licensing, resume-writing and networking.
- Linking with employers

Other issues identified by the participants included:

- Settlement and investment advice particularly as regards location and housing.
- Understanding opportunities available for self-employment and resources available such as apprenticeship, small business learning opportunities etc
- Understanding of the changing employment patterns for engineers in Canada due to rapid technological advances and globalization.
- Student exchange programs
- Use of innovative skills
- Linking diverse groups with common interests
- Sustenance of the small ethno-cultural associations

14. ITEM TWO: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

As illustrated by the best practice example presented by Mr. Wesolowski, ethno-cultural associations of internationally educated engineers are well placed to provide the following services:

- Facilitating language courses and communications training
- Facilitating advice on employment preparation courses and tools – Resumes, interview techniques and correspondence
- Creating networking opportunities through social gatherings, seminars, workshops and public lectures
- Identifying innovative skills and creating opportunities for the application of these skills
- Initiating dialogue the regulating bodies such as PEO
- Supporting the immigration to Canada of fellow professionals in their country of origin particularly in times of crisis

Other roles that the ethno-cultural associations could play were identified as follows:

- Creating mentoring opportunities involving experienced and established engineers who are members of the associations to meet with new internationally educated engineers
- Look at new opportunities in student exchange programs

- Use well established associations to initiate policy dialogue
- Networking between diverse associations.

15. THE WAY FORWARD

The following were the four 'windows of opportunity' that emerged as the way forward for supporting IEs:

1. New IE Associations

Members of the newer IE Associations stated that they needed the following support from CAPE to effectively serve their members

- Informational support about events, courses, meetings, career fairs, and other developments that would help IEs.
- Website support to let their members have access to this information.

2. Established Associations

In response to the needs expressed by the newer associations:

- The Association of Polish engineers and MOHANDES agreed to take up the case with their respective associations for inviting IEs from all ethno-cultural organizations to seminars and technical engineering presentations that they will hold in the future.
- The established associations will forward information about events they are organizing to CAPE who will put out this information on their website and the newer associations will inform their members about this website.
- EIPROC agreed to assist through networking and mentoring.

3. Contributions to Engineering Access Project.

The following were elements of support suggested for the Engineering Access Project:

- The Association of Polish engineers would assist the project in its language training and employment outreach research
- EIPROC will lend their considerable experience in working with a range of stakeholders including professionals, employers and Government to support the interactive research being undertaken through the engineering access project.

4. Working together

All the participants agreed that IEs face serious employment Barriers and that to address these the Associations of IEs need to work together to develop a collective agenda to serve IEs to access the engineering workplace in Ontario. To this end:

- SVNCP (Society of Vietnamese Canadian Professionals), CPAC (Chinese Professionals Association of Canada) and MOHANDES already participate in the steering committee of CAPE.
- All the Associations present will take up the case with their respective Associations for participation in the CAPE steering committee and its other initiatives.

16. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Name	Organization
1. Mr Martin Van Duyn	Netherlands Luncheon Club
2. Mr. T. Wesolowski	Association of Polish Engineers in Canada
3. Alberto de Santis	Council for Access to Professional Engineers
4. Uzma Shakir	Council of Agencies supporting South Asians
5. Valeria	
6. Bipin Chauhan	
7. Saeed Ziaee	Bangladeshi Engineers Association
8. Mr. Nickolay Paskale	Canadian Society of Iranian Engineers and Architects (MOHANDÉS)
9. Liudmylla Semenets	Association of Bulgarian Engineers of Canada
10. Martha Silva	Canadian Ukrainian Immigrant Aid Society
11. Mr Ben Joshan	Coalicion de Profesionales de las Americas
12. Jane Cullingworth	East Indian professionals & Residents of Canada
13. Farrukh Saleem	Prompt
14. Gurmeet Bamrah	Council of Agencies supporting South Asians
	Council for Access to Professional Engineers
Apologies	
15. Audrey Taylor	Jamaican Canadian Association
16. Mr. Hanny Hassan	Council of the Muslim Community of Canada